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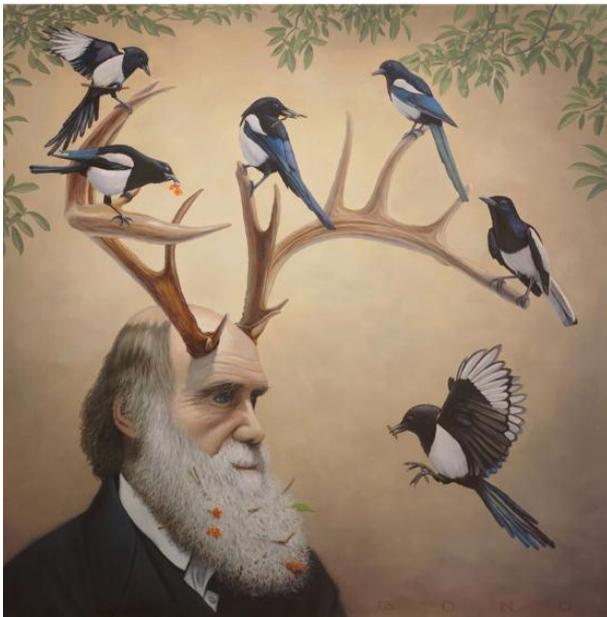
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Stylistic analysis of the phonetic texture of J. K. Rowling's novels

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Abstract

The study aimed to analyze stylistic devices employed by J.K. Rowling in the sound organization of her eleven literary works including her Harry Potter series as well as her tragicomedy Casual Vacancy and her first three detective novels: The Cuckoo's Calling, Silkworm and Career of Evil via quantitative analysis of linguistic data and stylistic. As a result, Rowling also employs a literary technique of transformation of word-sound images, i.e. wordplay. In conclusion, Rowling's novels are distinguished by aesthetic excellence in her employment of the entire arsenal of phonetic stylistic devices of the English language.

Keywords: Language, Linguistics, Learning, Alliteration, Assonance.

Análisis estilístico de la textura fonética de las novelas de J. K. Rowling

Resumen

El estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar los dispositivos estilísticos empleados por J.K. Rowling en la sólida organización de sus once obras

literarias, incluida su serie de Harry Potter, así como su tragicomedia *Casual Vacancy* y sus primeras tres novelas de detectives: *The Cuckoo's Calling*, *Silkworm* y *Career of Evil* a través del análisis cuantitativo de datos lingüísticos y estilísticos. Como resultado, Rowling también emplea una técnica literaria de transformación de imágenes de sonido de palabras, es decir, juegos de palabras. En conclusión, las novelas de Rowling se distinguen por la excelencia estética en su empleo de todo el arsenal de dispositivos estilísticos fonéticos del idioma inglés.

Palabras clave: lenguaje, lingüística, aprendizaje, aliteración, asonancia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent research works have exhibited the growing interest of language and literature scientists in studying sound composition and organization of both poetry and prose. Phonetic expressive means and stylistic devices not only assist in imparting a melodic effect to a character's utterances expressing certain emotions, helping readers to interpret the ideas of this character or the author through certain authorial vocabulary but also play a very important part in the characters' development. Every author has their own writing style, the distinct manner of expressing their thoughts and ideas by certain language means that are reflection of their personality as well as their perception of the elegant prose and its readability, another essential element of an effective writing style that makes an invaluable contribution to keeping a reader's attention and interest throughout the entire narration.

Rowling's works including the series of seven Harry Potter novels, translated into more than 70 languages, as well as the tragicomedy *Casual Vacancy* and four detective novels in the Cormoran Strike series, namely: *The Cuckoo's Calling*, *Silkworm*, *Career of Evil* and *Lethal White*, written by Rowling and published under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith, are undoubtedly an outstanding phenomenon of modern world literature. These books sold in millions of copies worldwide have already become pieces of the world's best classical and contemporary fiction. Gupta's book *Re-Reading GUPTA* (2009) discusses the political and social presumptions implanted in the texts of the Harry Potter series and analyses the way in which they have been accepted in different contexts and media (POLEVOY, 2018).

Heroism in the Harry Potter Series edited by Dr. K. Berndt and Dr. L. Steveker consist of a number of essays exploring various conceptions of heroism in the Harry Potter series. The authors come to the unanimous conclusion that Harry Potter novels rely on exemplary models of heroism based on responsibility, bravery, decency and kindness. The study by BONIFACIO (2013) represents a stylistic analysis of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series using Noam Chomsky's Transformational Grammar Theory. Here, the writing style of J. K. Rowling is studied in terms of sentence structure, verb tense and voice as well as in terms the of a number of kernel sentences in transformed sentences, with connectives and

reductions. A brief study of stylistic devices such as alliteration, rhythm, use of onomatopoeic expressions and individualization of characters' speech covering dozens of pages can be found, along with other more cardinal issues, in Claudia Fenske's work *Muggles, Monsters and Magicians* (KAYACAN, 2018).

This was initially carried out as a Ph.D. research and represents a successful attempt to explain Harry Potter's unrivaled global success by conscientiously conducted text-based analysis that allowed the author to define Rowling's narrative techniques and explain the worldview this series is based on. While the Harry Potter series is widely and intensively studied, Rowling's post-Harry Potter novels are, as of yet, less fortunate. The present study was not intended to be fundamental but it is a thorough and detailed one as far as phonetic stylistic devices used by Rowling in her novels are concerned.

The study was carried out on the vocabulary of the texts of Rowling's 11 novels of three different genres: fantasy, the tragicomedy *Casual Vacancy* (CV) and 3 detective novels of her *Cormoran Strike*: *The Cuckoo Calling* (CC), *Silkworm* (CW). The *career of Evil* (CE) and aimed at finding out whether the use of certain phonetic stylistic devices by Rowling are limited to the texts of her fantasy novels or identify her writing style irrespective of their genres.

2. METHODS

The methods employed in the research included the continuous sampling approach, quantitative analysis of linguistic data and stylistic, or corpus analysis. Stylistic analysis implies studying of the language used in the literary text, i.e. Grammar, number of words, their length, metaphors, similes, iconic vocabulary, etc. Leech and Short see the main reason for studying an author's idiosyncrasy in revealing characteristic features of one's unique manner of writing as a clue to a better understanding of the writer's ideas and intentions as well as profound acknowledgment of their artistic achievements.

Ericson emphasizes the importance of investigating the connection between language and literature in the study of corpus analysis assuming a word of text to be essential for maintaining an efficient and pleasurable intellectual dialogue between the author and the reader. Since there are few pieces of research of Rowling's usage of phonetic stylistic devices, as it was mentioned earlier, none of them being detailed and comprehensive enough or providing any quantitative data, this study was aimed, by means of methods stated above, to analyze these devices as well as their role in developing the characters of her novels.

3. RESULTS

The analysis of the experimental data revealed that the writing style of J. K. Rowling is characterized by extensive use of alliteration, assonance, iconic vocabulary, poetic rhythm and phonetic means of characters' speech individualization of the speech of the characters. The most striking bit of data is that the author employs more than 34% of the words the origin of which has been reliably identified as iconic. In addition, the percentage of the occurrence of the iconic vocabulary in her novels amounts to 12% on average. The findings showed that the broad range of stylistic devices is a distinctive and intrinsic feature of the author's writing style irrelevant to genres of her novels, playing a great role not only in creating unique sound portraits of her characters but also in the author's development of literary characters in general. These data might be possibly used as a relevant characteristic for text authorship attribution.

4. DISCUSSION

As proof of the previous pilot investigation, the analysis of the experimental material revealed that J. K. Rowling makes extensive use of alliteration in her novels. Only in the texts of her Harry Potter series, which are more than 3000 pages (199 chapters)

long, nearly a quarter of the chapter titles (23.2%) are based on the principle of alliteration. This can be illustrated by the following most striking examples: *Beagle at the Bay*, *The Centaur and the Sneak Detention with Dolores*, *Draco's Detour*, *The Dursleys Departing*, *Felix Felicis*, *Flight of Fat Lady*, *In the Hog's Head*, *The Keeper of the Keys*, *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, *Luna Lovegood*, *Maroeder's Map*, *Mudbloods and Murmurs*, *Mad-Eye Moody*, *Percy and Padfoot*, *Rita Skeeter's Scoop*, *The Sacking of Severus Snape*, *Talons and Tea Leaves*, *The Triwizard Tournament*, *The Woes of Mrs. Weasley* and many more.

The same principle applies to the names of animals that are represented in a large number in the novels about Harry Potter: *Norbert the Norwegian Ridgeback*, *Hungarian Horntail*, *Blood-Sucking Bugbear*, etc. This effect of iconicity that provides a faster path between meaning and form is more evident in English literary texts than, for instance, in those written in Russian mainly due to the morphological structure of the English word that is characterized by a relatively small number of derivational and inflectional elements together with the associated possibility to form words by zero derivation. Obviously, such likeness of word images does not obscure the iconic origin of its root and makes it more apparent and easier-to-perceive than in the case of similar lexemes in Russian as they are heavily loaded with affixes and inflections (Cf. for example, English verbs and nouns *clap* and

crack with similar Russian nouns *khlopok* and *tresk* and the corresponding verbs *pokhlopat* and *potreskivat'sya* derived from these two nouns).

Moreover, as Modern English poetry takes roots from classical Old English poetry with the core metrical features of traditional Germanic alliterative verse, alliteration is still not only widely used in poetry but is a specific ornamental feature of English prose (PATEL, 2006). The analysis of alliterative word-formations does not provide any basis to conclude that Rowling employs alliteration at the expense of meaning. These are more likely to be examples of organic synthesis of content and the way it is expressed.

Frequent use of iconic vocabulary can also be regarded as one of the key elements of Rowling's *idiostyle*. For example, her novel *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (GF)* consists of 636 pages (192 014 words) and numbers 852 iconic lexemes (18710 occurrences). Classification of words as iconic ones was based on the consolidated list of iconic vocabulary (2466 lexemes) compiled by I. V. Kuzmich and presented in her Ph.D. thesis KUZMICH (1993) and *The Dictionary of Iconic Vocabulary: Diachronic Approach* (FLAKSMAN, 2016). In several cases, the iconic status of the word was determined in accordance with the criteria of iconicity developed by (VORONIN, 1982).

As far as the sound texture of Rowling's novels is concerned, the analysis of the texts demonstrates quite a high frequency of iconic vocabulary occurrence. In fact, the writer employs 34.5% of the iconic words of the list. The iconic word pool used by the writer constitutes 9.7% of all words in the novels including functional words. It seems that such a large share of iconic words cannot be of accidental nature as 2466 words of the abovementioned list account only for 0.25% of the total number of English words, according to the data for 2009 provided by Global Language Monitor (GLM), is 1,000,000 words.

It is important that the iconic vocabulary of the novel is represented by every part of speech (nouns: glee, chunk, chatter, ruffraff, slug, pouf, swarm; verbs: cackle, chuckle, clatter, shudder, whinge; adverbs: gloomily, squeakily; adjectives: booming, squeaky, shabby; participles: rattling, spluttering, zooming; gerund: scrabbling; interjections: drip-drip, ooooooh, shhh, pip-pip, tap-tap tut-tut), the majority, though, is represented by the following groups of verbs:

- Verbs describing sounds produced by animals: bark, bleat, buzz, cluck, croak, drone, grunt, hiss, howl, hum, meow, purr, roar, squeak, trill, whine, etc.
- Verbs describing sounds produced by devices or other inanimate objects: bang, beep, blare, blast, chink, clatter,

crunch, clang, click, crack, creak, grumble, pop, rattle, ring, rumble, rustle, sizzle, splash, swish, thud, thrum, tick, tinkle, wheeze, whir, whizz, whoosh and many others.

- Verbs describing sounds produced by humans: bellow, boo, chant, cheer, chomp, chuckle, cough, hiccup, flute, gag, gasp, giggle, groan, guffaw, laugh, moan, puff, pant, sigh, squawk, sniff, sneeze, snore, snort, snuff, sob, wail, whistle, yawn, etc.

- Verbs describing sounds of human actions: knock, slam, smack, stamp, tap, thump,

- Verbs of oral communication, in particular verbs introducing direct speech of the characters that play an exceptionally important part in the vivid description of their manners of speech or personal speech peculiarities (blab, bellow, boom, cackle, croak, croon, drawl, gabble, gibber, slur, murmur, pipe, rasp, squabble, snap, stammer, splutter, whimper, wail, wheeze, etc.). The results are in full concurrence with the findings of an earlier study (BESEDINA, 2016).

It should be mentioned that as far as verbs describing sounds are concerned, the abovementioned group approach is a conditional one as some words could be allocated to different groups at once

due to their metaphorical nature. For example, the verb *scrunch* has the meaning make a loud crunching noise that covers both humans and objects. Similarly, though the verb *crow* means (of a rooster) make a very long and loud sharp cry, is often used by Rowling in introducing direct speech of her novel heroes so that to describe their speaking habits and voice sound characteristics: I said that, Mel, did not I? *crowed* the pink-haired girl (CC). The same situation in the studied novels occurs, for example, with the verbs such as *squeak*, represented by two different groups:

- Sounds produced by a device or a thing: He sat down on the arm of the sofa, which *squeaked* less than the cushions but *groaned* under his weight (SW). The nurses' rubber soles *squeaked* on the highly polished gray floor (CE);
- Characters' manner of speaking: No, no, no, *squeaked* Dobby, shaking his head so hard his ears flapped (CS). *Fabby, squeaked* Ciara, and with a feline glance of triumph at the brunette, she *downed* her drink in one (CC);
- Verbs of various types of motion that not only add dynamics and emotion to the narration but also explain some personal traits of the characters they describe (*bob, bustle, clutch, crawl, creep, crouch, dangle, dawdle, drag, drip, droop, dodge, fidget, flap, flick, fling, flit, flutter, fumble,*

glide, gloop, grab, grip, grope, hobble, hop, jerk, jiggle, jut, quiver, pop, ram, ruffle, scrub, shudder, shuffle, slide, slump, spin, sprawl, squash, stomp, strut, stumble, sway, swing, swivel, swoop, thrash, thump, toddle, tremble, trickle, trot, trundle, trudge, tumble, twiddle, twirl, twitch, waddle, waggle, wiggle, wink, whirl, wobble, zig-zag, zoom, etc.);

- Verbs expressing luminosity (blaze, dazzle, gleam, glimmer, glisten, glitter, glint, glow, flash, flare, flicker, shimmer, sparkle, twinkle, etc.).

5. CONCLUSION

Above all, Rowling also employs a literary technique of transformation of word-sound images, i.e. wordplay. This can be illustrated with malapropisms, the blundering use of a similar-sounding expression, for example, pheletone instead of telephone, escapator instead of escalator, pleasemen instead policemen or with spoonerisms, errors in speech where corresponding consonants, vowels, or morphemes are switched (a type of metathesis): Dread and Forge instead of Fred and George and some others. The analysis of the studied material leads to the conclusion that Rowling's novels are distinguished by aesthetic excellence in her employment of the entire arsenal of phonetic stylistic devices of the English language. This assists the author in creating unique speech

patterns and, therefore, characters that have a strong emotional impact on the readers.

This feature of Rowling's writing style has no correlation with the genre of her novels and presents an inherent characteristic of her idio style. The authors of the study put forward a hypothesis that the discussed features of Rowling's phonetic stylistics might be used as a relevant indicator of her text authorship. To prove the advanced hypothesis a more detailed comparative research should be carried out on the texts of some other modern English language writers.

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